



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Department of Health Urges Everyone To Get Vaccinated This Flu Season

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health is reminding all North Dakotans of the importance of getting vaccinated against the flu, according Amy Schwartz, immunization surveillance coordinator for the Department of Health.

“There is plenty of flu vaccine this year, so we are urging everyone to get vaccinated to avoid influenza, regardless of age or health status,” Schwartz said. “Getting vaccinated is the easiest and most effective way to protect yourself and your loved ones from the flu. Even if you don’t feel the need to be vaccinated to protect yourself, everyone is close to someone who is at high risk for complications due to influenza, so you still should be vaccinated.”

In North Dakota, influenza activity begins in the fall and typically peaks in March or April. Health officials say that people can get vaccinated anytime during the influenza season, but the best time to get vaccinated is now, when flu activity is low.

During a news conference held today at Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health, Michelle Feist, resident of Bismarck and a health department employee, talked about the importance of getting vaccinated and received her flu shot. Michelle is 7 months pregnant and talked about the importance of protecting both herself and her soon to be born baby.

“It is important for pregnant women to get the flu vaccine because we are at a higher risk for complications if we become ill with flu. I want to do everything I can to protect my unborn child,” said Feist. “I also want to protect my baby once she is born, so I will be asking everyone who will be around my baby to get vaccinated as well since she will be too young to get the flu vaccine herself.”

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone age 6 months and older be vaccinated against the flu, especially the following people at high risk for complications:

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Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

- All children ages 6 months through 4 years
- All adults 50 and older
- Residents of long-term care facilities
- People of any age who have long-term health problems, such as:
 - Heart disease.
 - Lung disease.
 - Kidney disease.
 - Diabetes.
 - Asthma.
 - Anemia.
 - Weakened immune systems due to HIV/AIDS and cancer treatments.
 - Breathing problems due to neuromuscular disorders.
- Pregnant women
- American Indians/Alaska Natives
- People who are morbidly obese

People who could spread the disease to those at high risk – such as health-care workers, out-of-home caregivers, parents and caregivers of infants younger than 6 months and household contacts – also should be vaccinated.

“Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health is prepared to kick-off prevention efforts to control the influenza virus,” said Naomi Friesz with Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health. “We have several walk-in flu vaccine clinics planned throughout October. Get vaccinated now so that you will be protected when flu season begins.”

Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health is also planning flu clinics in each of the public elementary schools in Bismarck. Parents should look for information during their parent teacher conferences.

Clinics are being planned by local public health units across the state and vaccine is available from many doctors and pharmacists. Several influenza vaccination clinics will be held in schools throughout the state as well. Residents are encouraged to contact their local public health unit, doctor or pharmacist for information about vaccine availability in their area.

For more information, contact Amy Schwartz or Jill Baber, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378. Information about influenza can be found at www.ndflu.com.

REMEMBER: A flu vaccine can protect not only you, but everyone around you.

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